

Form in the First Movement of the Classical Concerto:

Double Exposition and Ritornello

The first movement of the classical concerto typically combines two forms of organization:

It is a double-exposition sonata form, in which the first exposition, for orchestra alone, presents a first rotation of the basic material of the movement (P, TR, MC, S, C); it resembles a normal sonata-form exposition except that it doesn't modulate.

The second exposition is carried mainly by the soloist, and like a normal exposition it modulates to a main contrasting key.

Often some new material is added. Subscript numbers can be used to account for this, numbering based on order of appearance within the movement as a whole. Thus, if the soloist begins the S area with a new theme and then goes on to state the original S material, the content of the S area in the second exposition could be described as S_2S_1 .

It is also a highly structured version of ritornello form, deriving from the baroque solo concerto.

The first ritornello, remaining in the tonic, corresponds to the first exposition described above. It is by far the longest of the ritornellos.

The first solo modulates to the dominant, corresponding to the most of the second exposition. Often the first solo will conclude with the EEC (end of S).

The second ritornello begins in the main contrasting key, and remains there for at least most of its duration (it is generally fairly short). Often it presents C material, either picking up after the EEC, or else, especially if the soloist introduced new C material, presenting the C from the first ritornello. Sometimes the second ritornello ends with a modulation to a subsidiary key to begin the development.

The second solo corresponds to (most of) the development section, mainly exploring subsidiary keys. Sometimes new thematic material may be introduced in the second solo.

The third ritornello is the most variable. In general it is quite short. There are basically three possibilities:

- R3 may begin the recap, coinciding with the return to tonic and presenting the start of P.
- R3 may span the end of the development and the start of the recap, beginning in a sub-sidiary key, including the retransition, and including the start of the recap of P in tonic.
- R3 may not appear at all, in which case S2 and S3 are instead one long solo.

The third solo is basically a recap of the first solo in tonic, often in Mozart presenting all of the material heard in the first ritornello and solo (except, often, the closing) if the first solo left out any of the material from the first ritornello.

The fourth ritornello is basically a tonic-key version of the second ritornello; it generally includes the cadenza, and it may well include added coda material.

Form for the First Movement of the Classical Concerto

